

85-224

Family Violence in Canada:

A Statistical Profile
1998



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Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile

1998

By Valerie Pottie Bunge and Andrea Levett

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Highlights

Spousal violence:

- In 1996, 21,901 cases of spousal assault were recorded in a sample of 154 police departments across the country. The proportion of male victims of spousal assault was relatively small (11%) compared to female victims (89%).
- In 1996, approximately 80% of victims of criminal harassment or stalking were women. Over half of all female victims of criminal harassment were harassed by ex-spouses or other intimate partners.
- In 1993, a national telephone survey conducted by Statistics Canada found that the rate of wife assault was 29% of ever-married women. Over half of these women experienced serious assaults.
- Women living in rural areas were slightly more likely than their urban counterparts to leave abusive partners as a result of abusive or threatening behaviour (45% compared to 42%), and more likely than urban women to eventually return (79% compared to 67%).
- The strongest predictors of wife assault are the young age of the couple (18 to 24 years), living in a common-law relationship, chronic unemployment on the part of male partners, women and men who witnessed abuse as a child, and the presence of emotional abuse in the relationship. In fact, the greatest predictor of wife assault is the use of emotional abuse by male partners. When the effects of these risk factors were taken into consideration, level of education, consumption of alcohol, and income level lost significance in terms of predicting the presence or absence of wife assault.

Child abuse:

- In 1996, children (under 18 years of age) made up 24% of the Canadian population and were the victims in 22% of all violent crimes reported to a sample of 154 police departments.
- In 1996, 60% of police-reported sexual assaults were against children, one-third (32%) of which occurred at the hands of a family member.
- Girls and boys appear to be vulnerable to abuse by family members at different stages of their development. Higher numbers of girls were sexually assaulted by a family member at 12-15 years of age. In contrast, boys were more likely to be sexually assaulted between the ages of 4 and 8 years.
- In 1996, 18% of physical assaults reported to the police were against children under 18; 20% of these were carried out by a family member.

Abuse of older adults:

- Older adults (65 years of age and older) made up 12% of the Canadian population in 1996 and they were the victims in 2% of violent crimes reported to the police. One-fifth of these were committed by a family member.
- In 1996, the vast majority of reported crimes committed against older persons by family members were physical assaults (91%). Common assault alone accounted for almost three-quarters (74%) of all crimes against older adults by family members.
- Older women continue to be abused by their partners as they age. Older women were most often victimized by a spouse (42%) while for older men the accused was most often an adult child (59%).

Family homicide:

- Between 1977 and 1996, there were 12,666 victims of homicide in Canada. One-third involved victims and offenders who were related to each other by marriage, common-law union or kinship, another 49% involved acquaintances, and 17% involved strangers.
- The largest proportion of family homicides (49%) involved spouses. One in every five family homicides was a child killed by a parent (22%) and another 10% were parents killed by children.
- Historically, men have been more likely than women to kill their spouse. Between 1977 and 1996, 1,525 wives were killed by their husbands compared to 513 husbands killed by their wives.
- For children under 18, the highest risk of homicide occurs within the first two years of life. The rate of homicide for infants under two is seven times higher than the rate of homicide for those aged 2 –17, 5 times higher than for those aged 18 to 64, and 8 times higher than for those aged 65 and over.
- In over half of all spousal homicides (56%) and over one-quarter of family homicides involving children and older adults (26% and 24% respectively), investigating police officers had knowledge of previous domestic violence between victims and suspects.

Introduction to a New Series

As part of the Federal government's Family Violence Initiative, the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) is producing a new annual report called *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*. The purpose of this report is to provide the most up-to-date data on the nature and extent of family violence in Canada and to monitor trends over time. In future, the report will have a special focus or theme. This report, the first in the series, provides a general overview of the most recent information on the abuse of spouses, children and older adults.

Throughout this report, and those to follow, a general underlying theme will become apparent: the serious challenges facing researchers and data collection agencies as they attempt to quantify these very personal and very sensitive events. The most comprehensive statistical data on some types of family violence in Canada are available from official police reports or the records of social service agencies. These agencies collect information on reported cases of family violence. Child abuse and the abuse of older adults, for example, do not lend themselves easily to inclusion on telephone surveys because of ethical considerations (in the case of children in particular) and because of concerns about the quality and reliability of data obtained from very young or very vulnerable victims who may be dependent on their abusers. Whereas violence against adult women has been successfully included on a number of victim surveys around the world, similar approaches to measuring abuse of children and older adults are in their infancy. Currently, efforts are underway at Statistics Canada to improve data collection in the areas of spousal, child and senior abuse.

The data for this report are drawn from a number of sources including police reports from the Incident based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR II), the Homicide Survey, the Transition Home Survey and the Violence Against Women Survey. In addition, information is extracted from various publications and articles. This series will evolve in breadth and scope as other sources of statistical data become available.

Spousal Violence¹

Incidents of Spousal Violence Reported to the Police

In the early 1980s, mandatory charging policies in spousal assault cases were initiated in police departments across Canada. The aim of this new policy was to increase the severity and certainty of the criminal justice response to spousal assault in order to encourage the reporting of offences as well as to offer protection and assistance to victims. Police were directed to lay charges in cases where there were reasonable and probable grounds to believe a serious indictable offence had taken place; however, police discretion was not completely removed. This section examines the nature and extent of cases of spousal violence reported to the police. Special attention is given to how spousal violence differs for women and men.

The Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR) is a national police survey that has been collecting data since 1962 on all incidents which come to the attention of the police. However, the UCR survey does not contain information on relationships that are needed to identify family-related assaults. Alternatively, the incident based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR II), captures detailed information on individual criminal incidents reported to police, including characteristics of victims, accused persons and the incidents. This newer survey is currently being implemented across the country, and now collects data from 154 police agencies in six provinces. These data represent 47% of the national volume of actual Criminal Code crimes. While these data provide a very rich and useful analytical tool, **the reader is cautioned that these data are not nationally representative:** respondents from Quebec account for 39% of the sample and those from Ontario account for a further 38%. Moreover, these data are largely an urban sample. Because of the nature of the sample, rates per population cannot be calculated.

In 1996, almost 22,000 incidents of assault on spouses were recorded; 89% involved female victims while 11% involved male victims (Table 1). Almost three-quarters of women (72%) were victimized by a current spouse. The majority of male victims of spousal violence (68%) were also victimized by a current spouse. In addition, 28% of women and 32% of men were victimized by an estranged or former spouse. These percentages are disproportionate to the rate of separated or divorced men and women in the population. In 1996, 3% of Canadian adults were separated, 5% were divorced, 59% were married or living in a common-law relationship, 6% were widowed and 27% were single. The risk to women of serious violence in the early aftermath of separation is well documented and, as will be discussed in a later section, the risk to women of homicide following separation is also elevated.

Table 1
Spousal violence reported to police by gender of victims and relationship to accused, 1996

Relationship of accused to victim	Total ¹		Women		Men	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total accused	21,901	100	19,473	100	2,428	100
Spouse ²	15,600	71	13,937	72	1,663	68
Ex-spouse	6,301	29	5,536	28	765	32

¹ Excludes those cases where the sex of the victim is unknown.

² Spouse includes both married and common-law partners.

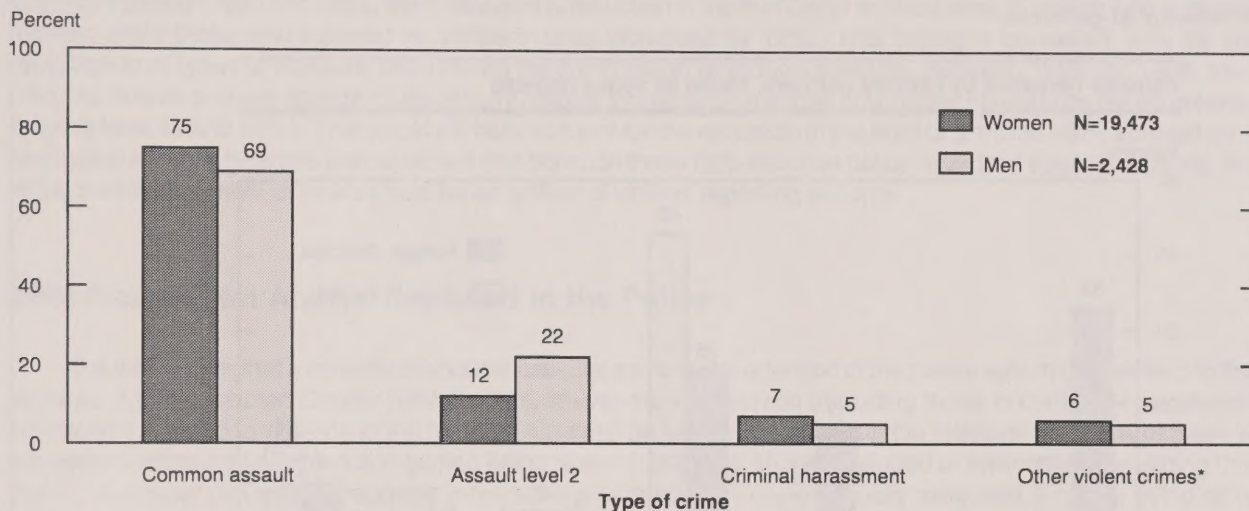
Source: Incident based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, (UCR II) Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, spouse includes both married and common-law partners

The vast majority of violent crimes committed against spouses were physical assaults (89%), with assault level 1 (assault which does not involve a weapon or cause serious physical injury) accounting for three-quarters of all crimes, and assault level 2 (assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm) representing another 13% of all crimes. Criminal harassment was the third most frequent violent crime reported to the police, accounting for 7% of all spousal incidents.

Figure 1

Spousal violence most often common assault



* Other violent crimes includes aggravated assault, assault with a weapon, discharging a firearm with intent, all sexual assault offences, kidnapping, hostage taking, abduction, robbery, extortion, homicide and attempts, criminal negligence, and other violations causing death.

Source: Incident based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR II), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996.

Although the proportion of male victims of spousal violence was relatively small (11%) compared to female victims (89%), men were proportionately more likely than women to be victims of more serious types of crimes, such as level 2 assaults (22% of men compared to 12% of women) (Figure 1). Women are more likely to use a weapon during the commission of an offence (46% of women compared to 21% of men) and are therefore more likely to be charged with level 2 assaults, while men tend more often to use physical force. However, when men were victims of spousal assault involving a weapon, they were less likely than women to be injured (12% of men compared to 58% of women). It appears, therefore, that some women may be using weapons for the purposes of threatening their spouse which results in police laying a more serious charge.

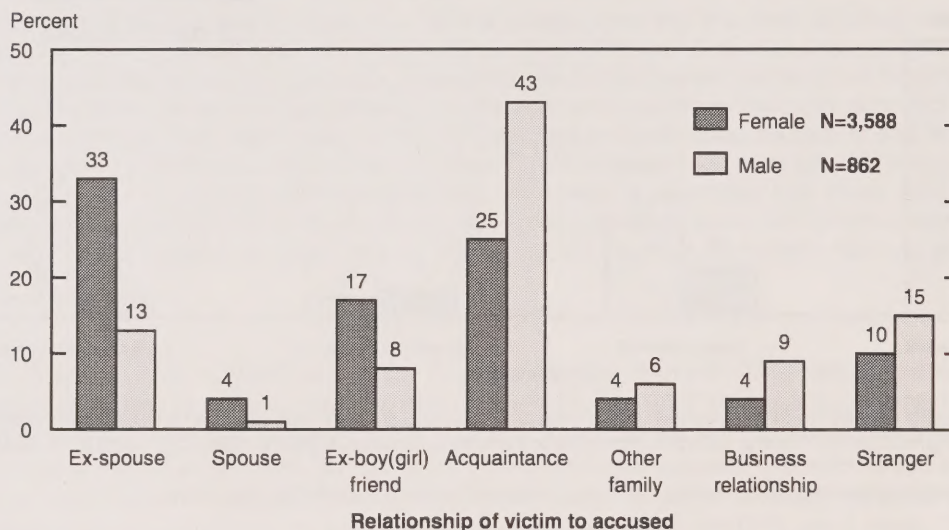
Charges were laid in the majority of spousal assault cases reported to police (84%). In 11% of cases, the police did not lay charges, at the specific request of the victim. In the remaining 5% of cases, the case was cleared otherwise, most often due to departmental discretion and reasons beyond the control of the police department. A larger proportion of cases involving female victims were cleared by charge (86%) compared to cases involving male victims (68%). Male victims were twice as likely as female victims to decline to lay charges against their spouses (20% of men compared to 10% of women).

Criminal Harassment

Criminal harassment, commonly known as stalking, was introduced into legislation in April 1993 in response to a number of highly publicized murders of women by their estranged partners. The purpose of the legislation was to better protect victims of criminal harassment by responding to harassing behaviour with more serious penalties before serious harm to the victim resulted. The offence generally refers to repeatedly following or communicating with another person, repeatedly watching someone's house or workplace, directly threatening another person or any member of their family, or causing a person to fear for their safety or the safety of someone known to them.

According to UCR II, approximately 80% of the 4,450 victims in 1996 were women. Moreover, the majority of persons accused of criminal harassment were male (88%). In 1996, the majority of female victims were stalked by ex-husbands, acquaintances or ex-boyfriends. In contrast, the majority of men were stalked by acquaintances and relatively few were stalked by ex-wives or ex-girlfriends.

Females harassed by intimate partners, males by acquaintances



Source: Incident based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR II), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996.

Of the cases where an accused was identified, 68% resulted in a charge being laid.¹ In 20% of incidents, victims declined to pursue charges. Women stalked by a person with whom they had a business relationship were the most likely to refuse to proceed with charges (31%). Furthermore, men and women who were stalked by ex-partners were also more likely to refuse to lay charges: 21% of women who were stalked by ex-husbands and 27% of men who were stalked by ex-wives refused to lay charges.

Information on the extent of criminal harassment in the general population is not yet available in Canada. Results of an American survey suggest the problem of stalking is not uncommon, particularly among women. According to the Violence and Threats of Violence Against Women in America Survey (1996), one in 12 American women were stalked at least once in their lifetime, the majority of whom (59%) were stalked by husbands, boyfriends or other persons they had lived with.² In contrast, one out of every 57 men in America had been stalked, the majority by male strangers (39%) or male acquaintances (32%). One percent of American women reported being stalked in the 12 months preceding the survey, compared to less than one-half of one percent of American men.

¹ The accused was not identified in 28% of criminal harassment cases reported to the police.

² Stalking was defined as "a course of conduct directed at a specific person that involves repeated visual or physical proximity, non-consensual communication, or verbal, written or implied threats, or a combination thereof, that would cause a reasonable person fear."

Trends in Police-Reported Spousal Assault Cases²

According to a sample of 61 police agencies, the number of incidents of spousal assault reported to police has dropped by 7% from 1993 to 1996. This trend is consistent with the overall decline in crime rates during the same time period. In 1996, 15,250 incidents of spousal assault were reported to this sample of police departments compared to 16,483 incidents in 1993. It is interesting to note that the number of male victims of spousal assault increased during this time period by 98 cases or 6% (from 1,561 to 1,659 cases). The number of female victims of spousal assault, while still eight times higher than male victims, decreased by 1,333 cases or 9% (from 14,898 to 13,565 cases).

The level of injury suffered by victims is often closely tied to the type of weapon used during the commission of the offence. Between 1993 and 1996, there was a 24% reduction in the number of spousal assault victims who suffered major injuries, while those who suffered no visible injuries increased by 12%. This finding is consistent with the reported reduction in all types of weapons used during the commission of spousal assaults. Between 1993 and 1996, the use of firearms, knives or sharp objects, clubs or blunt objects, physical force and all other types of weapons declined (reductions ranging from 19% to 52%). This would partially account for the reduction in the level of physical injury suffered by victims of spousal assault. Readers are cautioned that because these data describe police reports of spousal violence, changes in the profile or number of cases could be an artifact of victims' reporting patterns.

Wife Assault Not Always Reported to the Police

It is well known that a minority of spousal assaults come to the attention of the justice system. According to the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS), 29% of ever-married women (including those in common-law relationships) had been subjected to violence at the hands of a marital partner at some point in the relationship. Many of these women reported multiple acts of violence including being pushed, grabbed, shoved, slapped or having had something thrown at them. A smaller percentage reported more serious acts such as being sexually assaulted, choked, being hit with an object or having a gun or knife used against them (Table 2).

The Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS) was conducted by Statistics Canada in 1993 with funding from the federal government's Family Violence Initiative. A random sample of 12,300 English and French speaking women 18 years of age and older were interviewed by telephone about their experiences of physical and sexual violence, and sexual harassment, and perceptions of their personal safety. Households in the ten provinces were contacted. Women living in institutions and the Territories were not included in the survey universe.

² Data in this section come from a sample of police agencies that are not nationally representative. Police departments across Canada began participating at various times throughout the history of the UCRII survey. As a result, this analysis is limited to those police departments which have consistently reported data over a four year period. Consequently, the following analysis is limited to crimes reported to a sample of 61 police forces from 1993 to 1996 and represents 29% of all reported crimes in Canada.

Table 2

Number and percentage of ever-married women who reported violence by husbands and common-law partners by type of assault, Canada, 1993

Type of assault	Number in thousands	%
Total ever-married women	9,056¹	100
Total wife assault	2,652	29
Pushed, grabbed or shoved her	2,221	25
Threatened to hit her with his fist or anything else that could hurt her	1,688	19
Slapped her	1,359	15
Threw something at her that could hurt her	1,018	11
Kicked, bit or hit her with his fist	955	11
Beat her up	794	9
Forced her into any sexual activity when she did not want to by threatening her, holding her down, or hurting her in some way	729	8
Choked her	607	7
Hit her with something that could hurt her	508	6
Threatened to or used a gun or knife on her	417	5

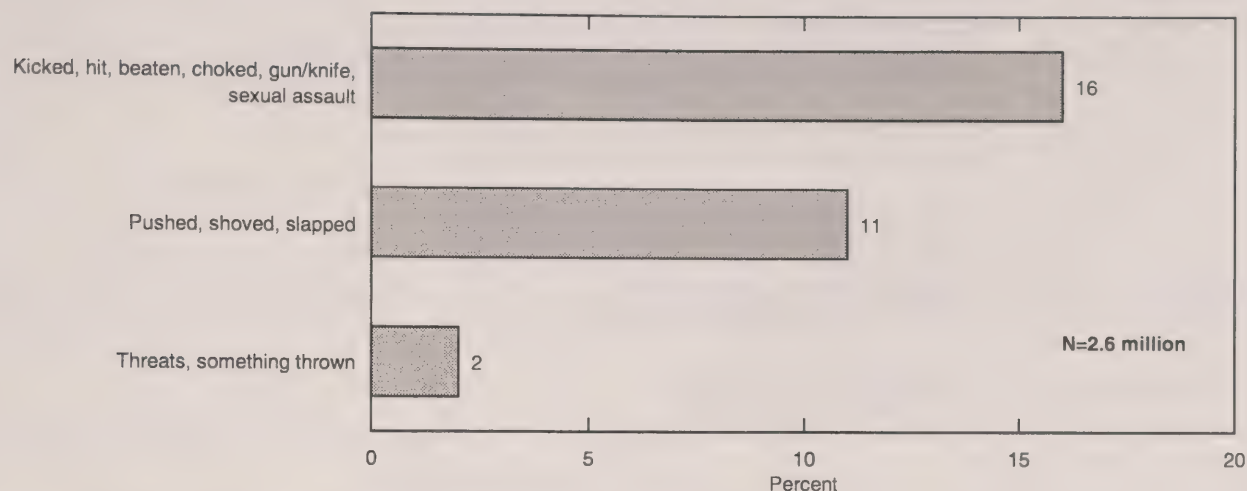
¹Figures do not add to totals because of multiple responses.

Note: Figures in this table have been weighted to the Canadian adult female population.

Source: Violence Against Women Survey, Statistics Canada, 1993.

Looking at the most serious type of violence these women ever suffered at the hands of an intimate partner, the majority (16%) reported serious forms of violence such as being kicked, hit, beaten, sexually assaulted or having a gun or knife used against them (Figure 2). Furthermore, 11% reported being pushed, shoved or slapped. Very few reported only threats or having something thrown at them (2%). Of these women who reported being victims of spousal violence in the VAWS, only one-quarter (26%) had reported an incident of violence to police.

Figure 2

Wife assault by most serious type

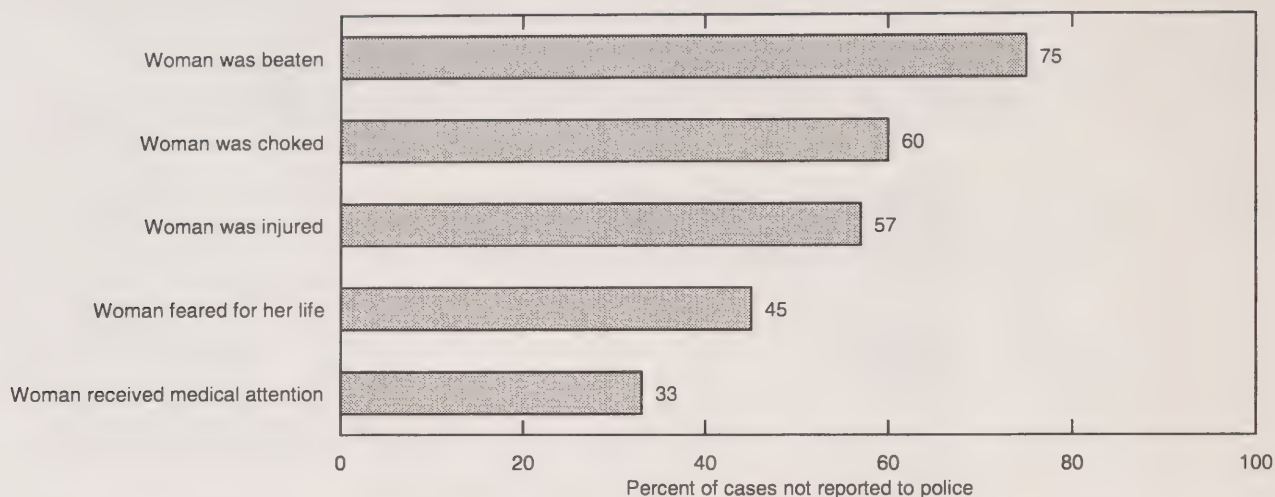
Refers to the 29% of ever-married women who have experienced violence by a spouse.

Source: Violence Against Women Survey, Statistics Canada, 1993.

Certain factors enhance the likelihood of women reporting incidents of wife assault to police. For example, the VAWS revealed that women were almost three times as likely to report the incident to police if their children had witnessed the violence against them, four times more likely if a weapon was used against them, and five times more likely to call the police if they feared for their lives. Moreover, 43% of women who had been injured during the relationship reported at least one incident to police, compared to 12% of women who had never been injured. The number of occurrences also had an impact on whether women notified the police: 49% of women who experienced more than ten episodes of abuse reported at least one to the police, compared to 6% of women who experienced only one episode of violence.

It is perhaps more important for policy purposes to highlight the characteristics of those incidents not reported to police: 57% of women who were injured, 51% of women who were assaulted more than 10 times, and almost half of all abused women who feared for their lives did not call police for protection or help in ending the violence (Figure 3). These findings emphasize the danger of spousal assaults to women and their children, and the very hidden nature of these events from public view, official attention and official statistics.

Figure 3

Many serious cases of wife assault not reported to police

Figures do not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

Source: Violence Against Women Survey, Statistics Canada, 1993.

According to the VAWS, police responded to the majority of wife assault calls made to them (84%). One-third of these cases resulted in charges, and the majority of these cases resulted in the offender appearing in court (an appearance rate of 26% of all cases to which police responded). In 20% of wife assault cases the police referred women to a community service. However, these figures may not reflect current reality given that women were asked to comment on events that, in some cases, happened some time before mandatory charging policies were developed.³

Leaving Abusive Partners

According to the VAWS, a woman's decision to leave a violent partner is motivated by factors related to the severity of the violence, reporting to the police and having children who witnessed the violence. Many women make the decision to leave when the violence begins to affect their children. The majority of women who left their partner stayed with friends or relatives (77%). Another 13% stayed in transition houses or shelters, 13% moved into a place on their own, and 5% stayed in a hotel.⁴

Not only were children a primary consideration in leaving a spouse, they were the primary consideration in the decision to return to an abusive spouse. Seventy percent of women who left their partners eventually returned home at least once. The most common reasons given for their decision to return were for the sake of the children (31%), wanting to give the relationship another try (24%), partner promised to change (17%), and a lack of money or place to go (9%).

³ The 1993 VAWS asked women about experiences of violence since the age of 16. Some of these events may have happened a very long time ago.

⁴ Percentages may not total 100% because of multiple responses if women left more than once.

There were few differences found between urban and rural women in the rates of violence or the severity of these acts. Yet, rural women were slightly more likely than their urban counterparts to leave their abusive partner as a result of his abusive or threatening behaviour (45% versus 42%) and a great deal more likely than urban women to eventually return home (79% versus 67%). This may be a reflection of the geographic distance to shelters or other services of support for rural women, the unavailability of services, a difference in culture that results in fewer rural women choosing family break-up in response to violence, or the fact that the farm or other family business is the source of livelihood for some rural women and represents their sole lifetime investment.

Some Women More at Risk of Spousal Assault⁵

There are many factors which may act as precursors to violence against wives.⁶ Research has indicated that factors such as the stresses and pressures associated with male unemployment and poor financial status, age, type of marital union, emotional abuse, alcohol use and early childhood exposure to violence all play a role in the complex dynamics of wife assault.

Unemployment, education and low income

Unemployment, low family income, and low occupational status are commonly cited as correlates of assaults by men on their wives (Kennedy and Dutton, 1989; Lupri, 1989; Gelles and Straus, 1988). Researchers argue that a poor financial situation often leads to stress, frustration, and anxiety that may culminate in violence, especially in families in which violence has become an acceptable coping response.

Taking a snapshot of experiences of wife assault that occurred in the one-year period prior to the 1993 VAWS, low income appears to be associated with wife assault. When respondents were asked in an open-ended question how violent incidents usually begin, they commonly cited stress over finances and finding work.

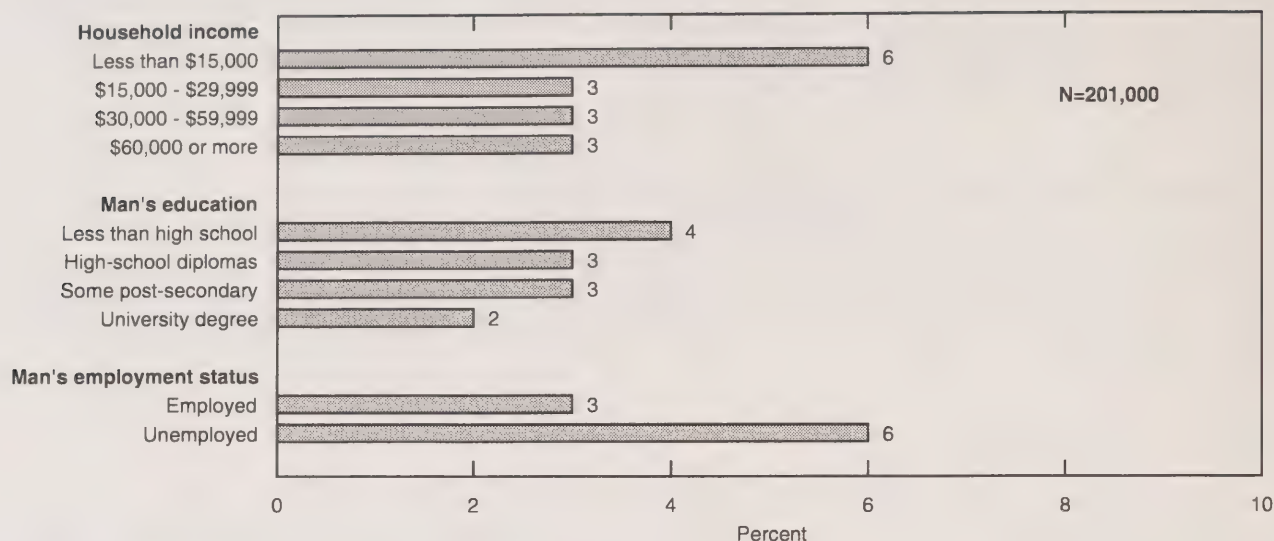
Figure 4 shows rates of violence by spouses during the 12-month period prior to the interview. Both family income and employment status are related to rates of violence: men living in families where the joint income was less than \$15,000, and unemployed men had rates of violence twice as high as those in more affluent families and employed men. Men with low education (less than high-school graduation) also had rates of violence twice as high as men with university degrees. However, the percentages which are being considered are quite low. When the effects of other variables are controlled, the effect of household income is lost and chronic unemployment becomes the significant predictor of wife assault.

⁵ This section on risk factors has been extracted from Holly Johnson (1996) *Dangerous Domains: Violence Against Women in Canada*. Scarborough: Nelson.

⁶ Throughout this section wives include common law partners.

Figure 4

One-year rates of wife assault by characteristics of male spouses



Source: Violence Against Women Survey, Statistics Canada, 1993.

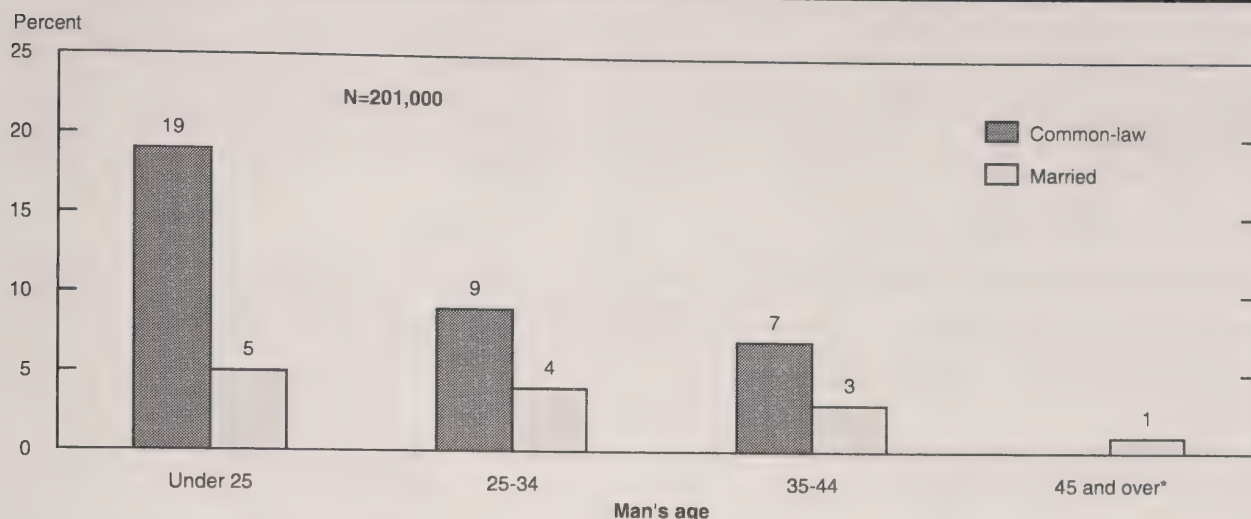
Age and marital status

Twelve percent (12%) of Canadian women aged 18-24 reported at least one incident of violence by a marital partner in a one-year period, compared with the national average of 3% of all married (or cohabiting) women. Rates of violence declined steadily with age down to just 1% of women 45 years of age and over. The same pattern was shown for male partners with the youngest age group showing the highest rates. A fourfold difference in rates of violence against women living in common-law relationships compared with women in registered marriages was also reported (9% and 2% respectively).

Figure 5 illustrates the effects of male partners' age combined with common-law marital status on the incidence of wife assault. This figure shows that the overall decline in rates of violence is due primarily to couples in common-law relationships. While rates do decline with age for married men (from 5% of men under age 25 down to 1% of those 45 and over), rates are higher for cohabiting men in all age groups, and they drop dramatically after age 25. The one-year rate of partner violence for cohabiting men under the age of 25 is 19%, six times higher than the national average of 3%. The immaturity of very young couples places them at increased risk of violence since many have not established peaceful means of working out conflict within intimate relationships. Furthermore, young common-law men tend to have higher than average rates of unemployment and low income which further exacerbates the situation.

Figure 5

One-year rates of wife assault by age of male spouses and type of union



* Figure not statistically reliable for common-law unions.

Source: Violence Against Women Survey, Statistics Canada, 1993.

Emotional abuse

Assaults on wives are frequently described as occurring within a context of emotional abuse and control. Attempts to wield power and control over another person can take many forms. It can include verbal attacks, ridicule, isolation from family and friends, jealousy and unwarranted accusations about infidelity, possessiveness, damage to or destruction of property, torture or killing of pets, and threats to harm children or other family members. The effect of these acts is to attack the woman's sense of self-worth and to render her emotionally dependent and under her husband's control (Follingstad et al., 1990).

The VAWS found that 35% of all women who had ever been married or lived with a man in a common-law relationship had been subjected to some form of emotional abuse. Controlling or emotionally abusive acts were also found to coexist with physical violence in a great many cases. Three-quarters of Canadian women who were assaulted or threatened also described their partners as controlling in one or more ways. A smaller proportion of relationships in which no violence was reported nonetheless contained attempts at control (18%). These behaviours were used with even greater frequency by men who inflicted serious violence on their wives, and as the seriousness of the assaults increased so did the type and frequency of men's attempts to control their partners. As Table 3 indicates, over half of all women with previous partners described them as emotionally abusive in one or more ways. Furthermore, 17% of those in an intact relationship reported some form of emotional abuse.

Table 3

Percentage of ever married women reporting emotionally abusive and controlling behaviour by marital partner (including common-law)

Type of emotional abuse	Current Partner		Previous Partner	
	No. (000's)	%	No. (000's)	%
Any emotional abuse	1,167	17	2,205	59
He insists on knowing who she is with and where she is at all times	689	10	1,352	36
He calls her names to put her down or make her feel bad	448	7	1,470	39
He is jealous and doesn't want her to talk to other men	384	6	1,422	38
He tries to limit her contact with family or friends	274	4	1,213	33
He prevents her from knowing about or having access to the family income, even if she asks	140	2	808	22

Note: Figures will not add to totals because of multiple responses.

Source: Violence Against Women Survey, Statistics Canada, 1993

The cycle of violence

Research has suggested that witnessing violence against one's mother will increase the likelihood that a woman will be involved in an abusive relationship herself, and that a man will be violent toward his spouse. The VAWS found that women in violent marriages were twice as likely to have witnessed their own fathers assaulting their mothers and were three times as likely as women in non-violent marriages to state that their spouse had witnessed violence as a child. Men who were exposed to violence in childhood also tended to inflict more serious and repeated assaults on their wives than men without this early exposure. These women were more frequently beaten, choked, threatened with a gun or knife and sexually assaulted, and were more likely to suffer physical injury as a result of the attacks. They also suffered more frequent episodes of violence.

Alcohol abuse

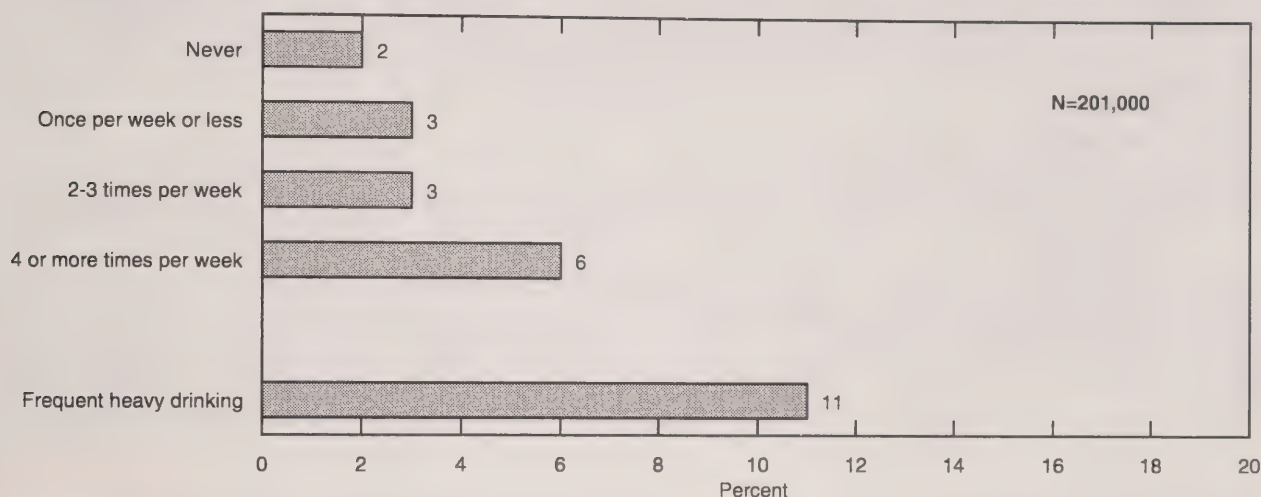
Excessive drinking is commonly cited to explain men's use of violence against their wives. Some battered women have described how their husbands' personalities change when they have been drinking excessively and attribute the violence almost entirely to this drinking problem (Martin, 1981). On the other hand, alcohol provides battered women, who are desperate to understand why their partners hurt them the way they do, with an explanation for their husbands' behaviour (Frieze and Browne, 1989; Walker, 1984; Browne, 1987). According to the VAWS, 51% of violent partners were usually drinking at the time of the assaults.

The role of alcohol in wife battering is complex. Some argue that alcohol reduces inhibitions and alters perceptions and judgement (Gelles and Straus, 1988). Others argue that it is not just heavy drinking but the combination of low occupational status, drinking and a belief in the acceptance of violence against one's wife that are associated with the greatest probability of violence (Kantor and Straus, 1990).

As Figure 6 shows, 2% of women living with nondrinkers and 3% of women living with moderate drinkers (those who drink up to 3 times per week) reported that their partner had assaulted them in the year prior to the survey. The annual rate of violence for regular drinkers (those who drink at least four times per week) was triple the rate for nondrinkers (6% compared with 2%). The rate of violence increased to 11% of women whose partners are problem drinkers (frequently consume five or more drinks at a sitting). However, a substantial amount of violence is perpetrated in the absence of alcohol and by abstainers and moderate drinkers. About half of assaulted women said their partners were not (or not usually) drinking at the time of the assaults. Furthermore, the majority of husbands who assaulted their wives did not have alcohol problems.

Figure 6

One-year rates of wife assault by male partners' use of alcohol



Source: Violence Against Women Survey, Statistics Canada, 1993.

Wife Assault a Complex Issue

As these survey data show, many "risk factors" are associated with wife assault. These include unemployment, income, age, marital status, presence of emotional abuse, witnessing violence as a child, and alcohol abuse. Furthermore, many of these factors are, themselves, related. When the effects of these variables are separated out through logistic regression analysis, the strongest predictors of wife assault were the young age of the couple (18-24 years), living in a common-law relationship, chronic unemployment on the part of male partners, witnessing violence as a child (by both men and women), and the presence of emotional abuse. In fact, the greatest predictor of wife assault was the presence of emotional abuse, particularly where the man degrades the woman by calling her names to put her down or make her feel bad.

Interestingly, when the effects of all these risk factors were taken into consideration, level of education, consumption of alcohol, and income level lost significance in terms of predicting the presence or absence of wife assault.

Wife Assault: International Comparisons

International statistics suggest that wife assault is a concern for women around the world. According to the VAWS, in Canada, 29% of ever-married women reported sexual or physical violence by a current or previous spouse. In a similar national telephone survey of 8,000 women conducted in the United States (Violence and Threats of Violence Against Women in America Survey, 1996), the proportion of women experiencing violence by a current or previous spouse was slightly lower (21%) than the Canadian rate. Similar results were also reported in a national survey of 6,300 women in Australia, where 23% of ever-married women had been physically or sexually assaulted by a spouse.

A New Zealand survey (Women's Safety Survey, 1996) found that 24% of women with a current partner and 73% of women with a recent partner reported physical or sexual abuse. This survey interviewed women by telephone or face-to-face depending on the woman's personal preference. By comparison, in Canada, 15% of women with a current partner and 48% of women with a previous marital partner reported violence.

Despite the methodological difficulties in conducting survey research in developing countries, researchers have succeeded in documenting a problem that affects significant proportions of women each year. Studies on spousal violence have been conducted in Mexico City, Cambodia, Columbia, Malaysia and Leon, Nicaragua. The percentage of spouses who have experienced some form of violence in a current relationship range from 52% to 16%.

Sources: *Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996.*
Ellsberg, Mary Carroll, 1997.
Morris, Allison, 1997.
Nelson, E. and C. Zimmerman, 1996.
Profamilia, 1990.
Rodgers, Karen, 1994.
Shrader, Cox E. and R. Valdez Santiago, 1992.
Women's AID Organization, 1992.

Shelters for Abused Women

Shelters or transition homes are intended to offer abused women, and their children a temporary but safe place to live during the crisis of assaults by partners. According to Statistics Canada's national survey on transition homes, 2,361 women accompanied by 2,217 children were living in shelters across Canada when a snapshot was taken on May 31, 1995. Four in five women were there to escape an abusive situation, the majority from abuse by a marital partner (64%) or ex-spouse (21%).

Younger women reported higher rates of wife assault to the VAWS than did older women, and younger women were more likely to use shelters to escape an abusive situation. Fully two-thirds of women admitted to a shelter in 1995 were under the age of 35, while less than five percent were over 55 years of age.

Types of shelters

The term 'shelter' is used broadly to refer to all residential facilities for abused women and their children. The following qualified as shelters for the purposes of the 1992-93 and 1994-95 Transition Home Surveys:

- **Transition home** - short or moderate term (1-8 weeks) secure placement for abused women with or without dependent children.
- **Second stage housing** - long term (3-12 months) secure placement for abused women with or without dependent children.
- **Family resource centre** - an Ontario initiative which provides services that are similar to transition homes (must at least provide a residential service).
- **Safe home network** - subsidiary, very short-term (1-3 days) placement for abused women, with or without dependent children, in private homes.
- **Satellite** - a short term (3-5 days) secure respite for abused women with or without dependent children. These shelters are usually linked to a transition home or another agency for administrative purposes.
- **Emergency shelter** - Short-term respite for a wide population range, not exclusively for abused women. Some may provide accommodation for men as well as for women. This type of facility may have residents not associated with family violence but who are without a home because of some other emergency situation.
- **Other** - All other homes/shelters for victims of family violence not otherwise classified.

The vast majority of all women who sought shelter to escape violence were victims of physical abuse (70%), almost half reported threats of abuse, and one-fifth experienced sexual abuse.⁷ One-quarter of women reported injuries that required medical attention when they came to the shelter, and 3% required hospitalization.

The Transition Home Survey suggests that increasing numbers of assaulted women in emergency shelters have sought the help of the criminal justice system. One-third of abused women in shelters in 1995 also reported the incident to the police, up from 25% in 1992 and 30% in 1993. However, even though shelter residents are likely to be among the most severely victimized women, charges were laid in only 56% of cases that were reported to the police. The percentage of reported incidents that resulted in restraining orders rose between 1993 and 1995 from 12% to 19%.

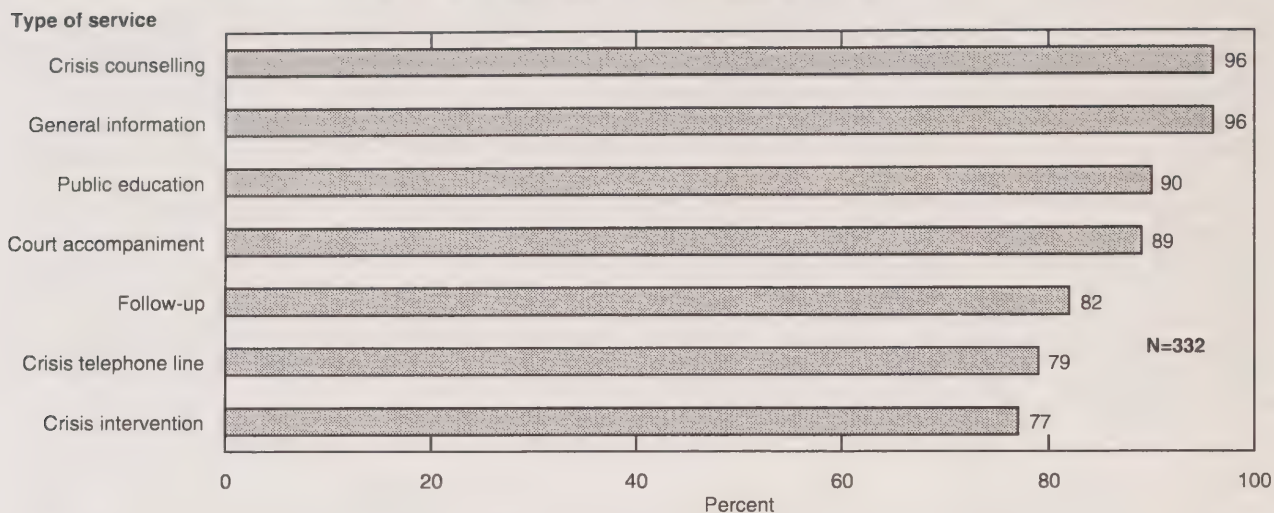
Shelters Becoming Multi-Service Providers

Shelters across Canada provide many services to residents as well as to other members of their communities. On May 31, 1995, a snapshot was taken of 405 residential facilities providing services for abused women and their children across Canada. In the 12 months prior to this date, the 365 reporting shelters recorded over 85,000 admissions. In addition, on a typical day they received approximately 3,000 requests for services from non-residents.

⁷ Figures do not add up to 100% because of multiple responses.

Figure 7

Services offered by shelters



Figures do not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

Source: Transition Home Survey, 1992-93. Data from 1994-95 are available only for services for children, since in 1994-95 the focus of the Transition Home Survey was on children.

As Figure 7 demonstrates, shelters offer a wide variety of services to residents and non-residents. Furthermore, they often refer women and children to other services available within the community. In 1993, clients were often directed to mental health related services, addiction programs, legal services and medical services.

Growth in Canadian Shelters

The number of shelters for abused women has been increasing steadily since the 1970s. Of the 371 residential facilities contacted for the 1992-93 Transition Home Survey, 18 existed prior to 1975 and an additional 57 began operation between 1975 and 1979. The largest growth came in the 1980s when the issue of family violence and violence against women gained the attention of all levels of government. By 1989, Canada had 280 transition homes for abused women. This increased to approximately 400 in 1995 and 550 in 1998. Much of the increase between 1989 and 1998 was due to the development of shelters and second stage houses in underserved areas, particularly in Aboriginal communities and rural regions.

Child Abuse⁸

Child abuse and neglect often result in physical, emotional and developmental problems which can affect victims throughout their lifetime (O'Keefe, 1995; Jaffe, Wolfe and Wilson, 1990). However, counting cases of child abuse is fraught with many difficulties (Della Femina, Yeager, and Lewis, 1990; Stein and Lewis, 1992; Widom, 1988). Some of the problems encountered include: definitional problems, and issues relating to detecting cases of abuse, such as the secrecy surrounding the event, the dependency of the victim on the perpetrator, the lack of knowledge among victims about available help, and fear of repercussions for reporting the event. All these issues lead to underreporting and, consequently, an underestimate of the extent of the prevalence of child abuse.

There are currently no national estimates of the prevalence of child abuse in Canada. Limited data on child abuse are available from a variety of sources including general population surveys, provincial/territorial child welfare caseload data, clinical sample studies and police statistics. Each has certain advantages and limitations. Population surveys have been used in an effort to identify cases that have not been reported to authorities. These surveys typically rely on adult victims or parents to identify specific incidents of maltreatment, but it is assumed that these result in an underestimate because victims and parents may be reluctant to disclose abuse, particularly if parents themselves are the abusers.

Differences in the way data are collected in each jurisdiction do not allow for inter-provincial comparisons of child welfare caseload data, nor do they provide a basis for estimating national child welfare statistics.⁹ Estimates based on clinical samples are typically small and not representative of the population.

Incidence of Child Abuse Reported to the Police¹⁰

Incidents of violence against children reported to the police also form only a partial estimate of the prevalence of child abuse. Nevertheless, police-reported statistics provide an important tool for profiling cases of child abuse that are detected and deemed serious enough for criminal justice intervention.

In 1996, children (those under 18 years of age) made up 24% of the Canadian population and were the victims in 22% of all incidents of violent crime reported to a sample of police forces. Eighteen percent of physical assaults reported to the police were against children under 18 years of age. One-fifth (20%) of these were carried out by a family member. A much higher proportion (60%) of reported sexual assaults were against children, of which one-third (32%) occurred at the hands of a family member (Table 4).

⁸ Parts of this section are based on Robin Fitzgerald, "Assaults against Children and Youth in the Family, 1996" *Juristat*, Vol. 17, No. 11, Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada, 1997.

⁹ The Child Maltreatment Division of Health Canada is currently developing a national incidence study of child abuse and neglect. The study addresses the four principle types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. A standard data collection tool will be completed by child welfare workers on reported cases of child abuse and neglect. One of the main objectives of this study is to provide national estimates on the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

¹⁰ For the purposes of this analysis, "children" include young persons under 18 years of age.

Table 4

Child victims of physical and sexual assault by accused-victim relationship and gender of victim, 1996¹

Relationship of accused to victim		Physical Assault			Sexual Assault		
		Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
Total	No.	6,160	10,199	16,359	5,009	1,465	6,474
	%	100	100	100	100	100	100
Family	%	30	14	20	33	30	32
Non-family	%	66	80	75	61	63	62
Unknown	%	4	5	5	6	7	6
Total family	No.	1,855	1,473	3,328	1,662	440	2,102
	%	100	100	100	100	100	100
Parent	%	59	70	64	42	48	43
Sibling	%	21	21	21	29	24	28
Extended family ²	%	6	8	7	27	28	27
Spouse	%	14	1	8	2	1	1

¹ Based on incidents reported to 154 police agencies which represent 47% of reported crime in Canada.

² Includes others related by blood or marriage, e.g., grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws.

Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Incident based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR II), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996.

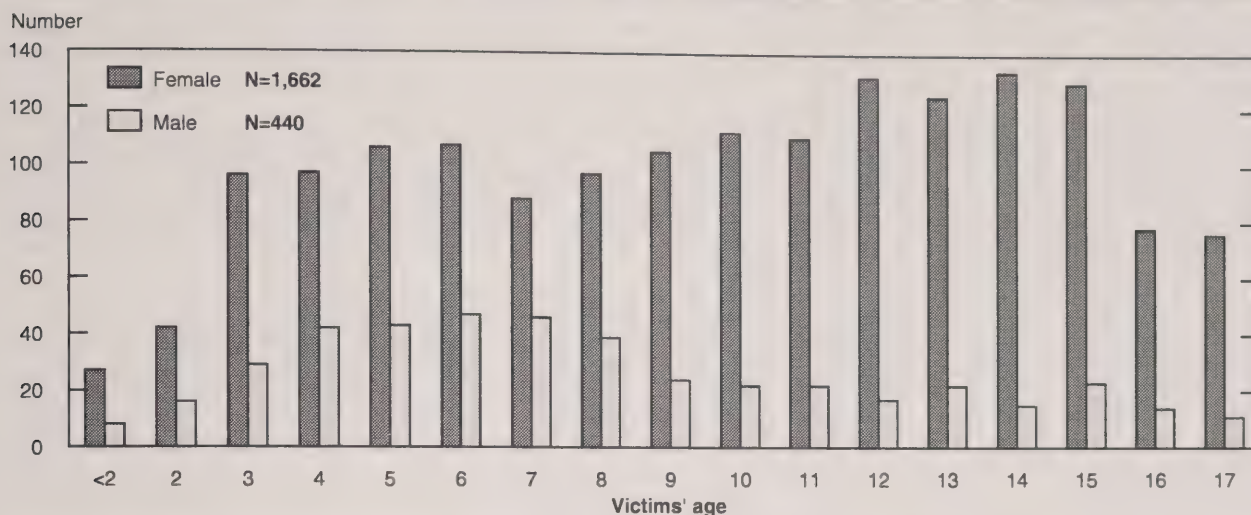
Of the reported child abuse cases which were committed by family members (20% of physical assaults and 32% of sexual assaults), parents were the most likely perpetrators in cases of both physical and sexual assaults (64% and 43%, respectively). Extended family members were more likely to be implicated in sexual assaults against children (27% of sexual assaults compared to 7% of physical assaults). Of the physical assaults committed by a parent, fathers were responsible for 73% while mothers were responsible for 27%. However, in cases of sexual assault, fathers far outweighed the number of mothers (98% versus 2%).

Overall, girls were the primary victims of sexual assaults by family members. Girls represent four in every five victims of sexual assault by a family member (79%), and were also the victims in over half of physical assaults (56% were girls and 44% were boys). A substantial proportion (14%) of girls who had been physically assaulted had been victimized by a spouse or common-law partner. Given the extreme vulnerability of children in the context of physical and sexual assault by a family member, it is not surprising that 61% of child victims were injured.

Girls and boys appear to be vulnerable to abuse by family members at different stages of their development. Higher numbers of girls, were sexually assaulted by a family member at 12-15 years of age. In contrast, boys were more likely to be sexually assaulted between the ages of 4 and 8 years (Figure 8). The likelihood of being physically assaulted increased with age for both boys and girls, reaching a peak for girls at the age of 17 and for boys at the age of 13 (Figure 9).

Figure 8

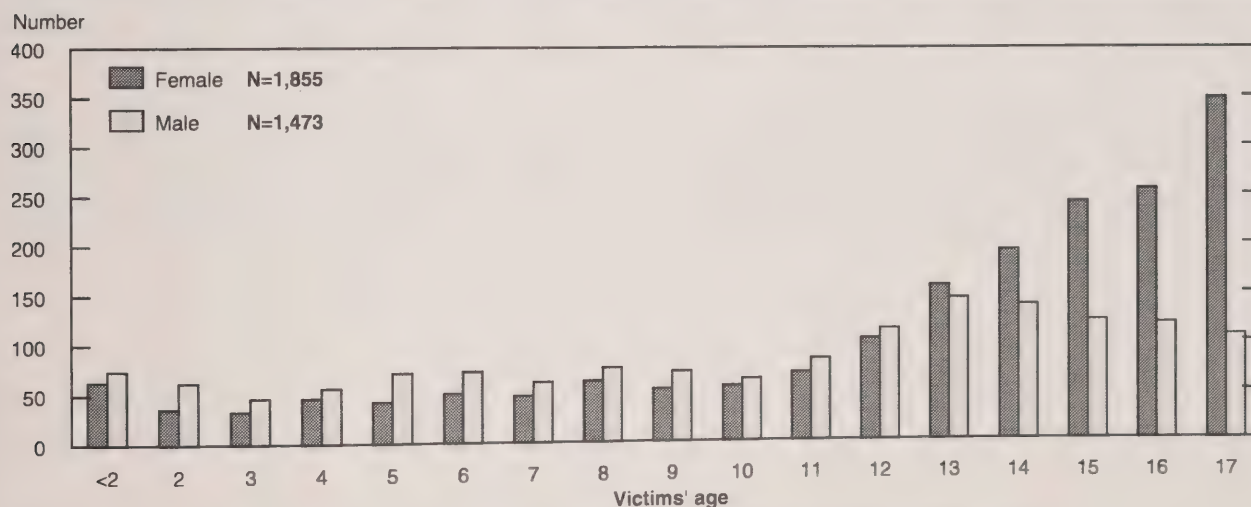
Number of victims of family-related sexual assault by age and gender, 1996



Source: Incident based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR II), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996.

Figure 9

Number of victims of family-related physical assaults by age and gender, 1996



Source: Incident based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR II), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996.

Exposure to Violence

Empirical studies indicate that children who witness violence between their parents are at an increased risk of behavioural and developmental problems and are at a greater risk of becoming victims and perpetrators of violence themselves (O'Keefe, 1995; Jaffe, Wolfe and Wilson, 1990). Furthermore, children who witness violence by one parent against the other often suffer emotional trauma, difficulties in their interactions with others, increased aggression, an absence of close emotional ties to their parents, and disrupted parenting. The negative impact on children witnessing violence in the home has led some provinces (Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Alberta) to enact legislation which extends the definition of a child in need of protection to include children who are exposed to domestic violence. The VAWS found that 39% of violent marriages had children who witnessed violence directed against their mothers by their fathers. This is equivalent to at least 1 million children who have been exposed to some level of violence in their homes.

In the 1995 snapshot of Transition Homes, there were 2,217 children living in shelters across Canada on one day alone, the vast majority of which were under 10 years of age. Fully 93% of children were accompanying women admitted into shelters because of abuse. Thirty percent of these women stated that they were protecting their children from psychological abuse, 16% were protecting their children from physical abuse, 14% from threats, 7% from neglect and 6% from sexual abuse. In addition to the harmful effects of witnessing violence against their mothers, children who are uprooted and brought to shelters suffer significant disruption in their daily routines, friendships, and education which can have a further negative impact on their social and emotional development.

Criminal Abuse of Older Adults¹¹

With the aging of Canada's population projected to increase into the next century, the study of the abuse of older adults may become increasingly important to health and social service providers, the justice community, and Canadians in general. According to Statistics Canada, in 1996, 3.6 million persons, or 12% of the Canadian population, were aged 65 years and over. The proportion of older adults is projected to increase to 17% by 2016 and to 23% by the year 2041.

Currently, there is no widely agreed upon definition of "senior abuse." It can encompass a number of actions and inactions including physical and sexual assault, neglect, psychological or emotional abuse, and financial or material exploitation. Many of these aspects are difficult to define and measure. Most researchers agree that "senior abuse" is characterized by abuse by persons with some degree of intimacy or emotional closeness to the elderly victim, including family members and non-family caregivers. Definitional and conceptual problems have hampered research in this area, especially studies attempting to quantify the extent of various types of abuse against older adults. For this reason, very little quantitative data currently exist on the nature and extent of abuse of older adults in Canada. One available source of statistical data is police records. The following section is based on all crimes which were reported to the UCR II survey by 154 police departments in 1996.

Abuse of Older Adults by Family Members¹²

Similar to spousal assault and child abuse, it is suspected that a small portion of abuse of older adults ever comes to the attention of the justice system. Older adults may be reluctant to report abuse and maltreatment to police due to emotional, physical or financial dependence on the abuser or simply because of embarrassment that the abuse is taking place, especially if the abuser is an adult child. Fear may also contribute to the secrecy of the abuse if the older adult is being threatened with institutionalization.

In 1996, older adults were victims in 2% of violent crimes reported to the police. Family members were involved in 20% of all violent crimes against people 65 years and over, with children and spouses accounting for the majority of accused in these cases (44% and 34% respectively) (Table 5). According to police data, the percentage of violent crimes carried out by family members against older adults has remained fairly constant since 1993, ranging between 19% and 24%. Throughout this period, spouses and children continued to be the primary perpetrators of these crimes.

¹¹ For the purpose of this analysis, "older adults" include all persons 65 years of age and older.

¹² Criminal abuse of the elderly in this section refers to actual Criminal Code offences against persons 65 years of age and over that are committed by family members including spouses, children, parents, siblings and extended family members and are reported to the police.

Table 5

Number and proportion of older victims of violent crime by relationship of accused to victim and gender of victim, 1996¹

Relationship of accused to victim	Total ²		Women		Men	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	2,427	100	1,322	100	1,105	100
Family	495	20	339	26	156	14
Non-family	1,729	71	876	66	853	77
Unknown	203	8	107	8	96	9
Total family	495	100	339	100	156	100
Child	216	44	124	37	92	59
Spouse/ex-spouse	169	34	141	42	28	18
Sibling	61	12	38	11	23	15
Extended family	49	10	36	11	13	8

¹ Based on incidents reported to 154 police agencies, representing 47% of reported crime in Canada.

² Excludes cases for which the sex of the victim is unknown.

Source: Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR II), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996

Similar to the patterns discussed for children, older women were more likely to be abused by a family member than were older men. In 1996, more than one in four older female victims were assaulted by a family member compared to one in seven older males. These findings are consistent with trends observed since 1993.

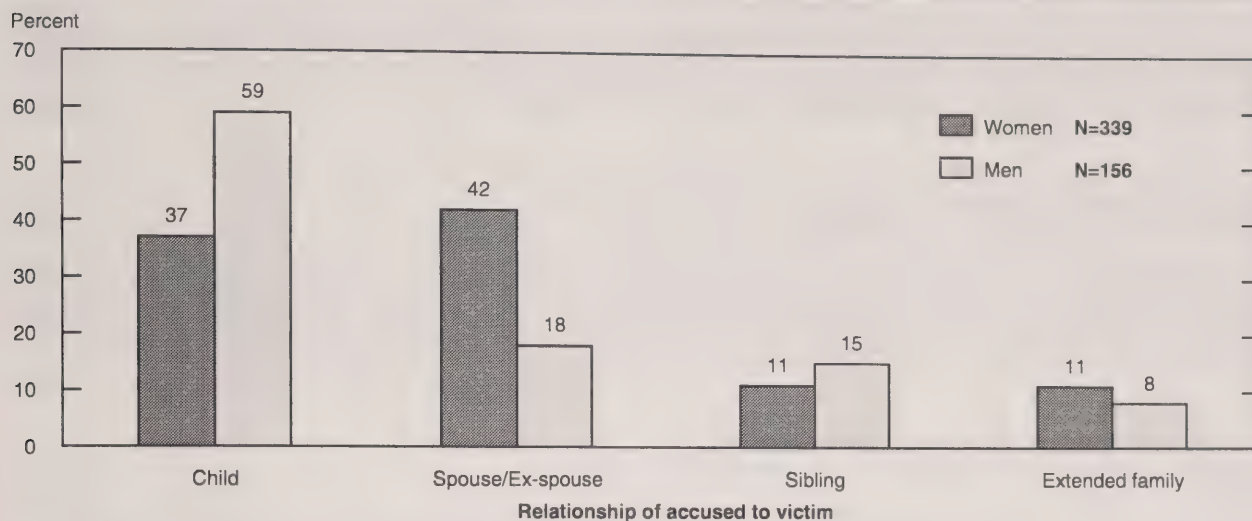
Recent literature suggests that older women continue to be abused by their partners as they age (Sacco, 1991). This tends to be supported by police statistics which indicate that the nature of an abusive relationship differs depending on the gender of the victim. In 1996, the UCR II Survey found that older men were most often victimized by their adult children (59%), while for older women, the accused was most often a spouse (42%), followed by children (37%) (Figure 10). Furthermore, adult children were the most likely perpetrators of violent crimes committed by a family member against an older person (44%). Sons were most often the perpetrators in these cases (84%) while daughters were responsible for 16% of parental assaults.

In 1996, the vast majority of crimes (91%) committed against older adults by family members were physical assaults. Common assault alone accounted for almost three quarters (74%) of all police recorded crimes against seniors by family members (Figure 11). Men were more likely than women to be victims of assault with a weapon or assault causing bodily harm (23% compared to 13%).

Fifty-six percent of older adults reported injuries to the police. Older men were three times more likely than older women to sustain injury by means of a blunt or sharp instrument (e.g. club or knife). Women, on the other hand, were more likely to be injured by the physical force of their attackers.

Figure 10

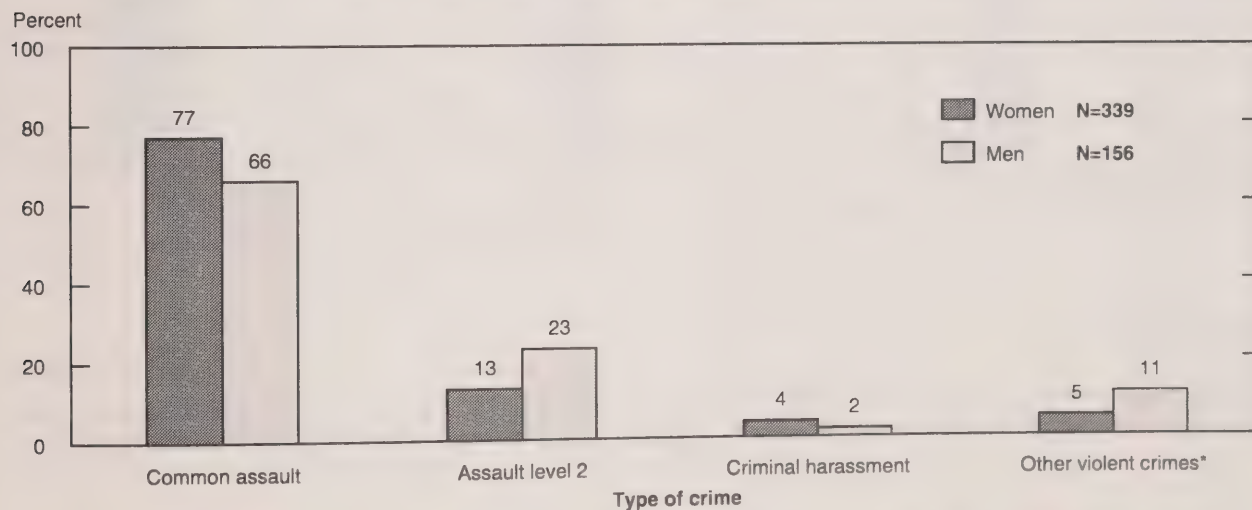
Older women victimized by spouse, older men by adult children, 1996



Source: Incident based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR II), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996.

Figure 11

Criminal abuse of older adults most often common assault, 1996



* Other violent crimes includes aggravated assault, assault with a weapon, discharging a firearm with intent, all sexual assault offences, kidnapping, hostage taking, abduction, robbery, extortion, homicide and attempts, criminal negligence, and other violations causing death.

Source: Incident based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR II), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996.

Family Homicide

Homicide is the most tragic form of family violence. Between 1977 and 1996, there were 12,666 victims of homicide in Canada.¹³ One-third involved victims and offenders who were related to each other by marriage, common-law union or kinship, another 49% involved acquaintances and 17% involved strangers.

Relationship of Accused to Victims

The largest category of family homicides between 1977 and 1996 involved spouses (49%) (Table 6). One in every five family homicides was a child killed by a parent (22%) and another 10% were parents killed by children. Siblings represent 7% of family homicides, with brothers accounting for the majority of homicides committed by siblings.

Table 6
Number of family homicides by accused-victim relationship, 1977 - 1996

Accused was:	Number	Percentage
Husband	873	21
Common-law husband	532	13
Wife	216	5
Common-law wife	278	7
Ex-husband	120	3
Ex-wife	19	-
Father / Step-father	539	13
Mother / Step-mother	368	9
Son / Step-son	385	9
Daughter / Step-daughter	32	1
Brother / Step-brother	245	6
Sister / Step-sister	26	1
Other family	560	13
Total family homicides	4,193	100

- - amount too small to be expressed

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1977-1996

Spousal homicides

Historically, men have been more likely than women to kill a spouse. Between 1977 and 1996, 1,525 wives were killed by their husbands (75% of all spousal homicides) compared to 513 husbands who were killed by their wives (25%).

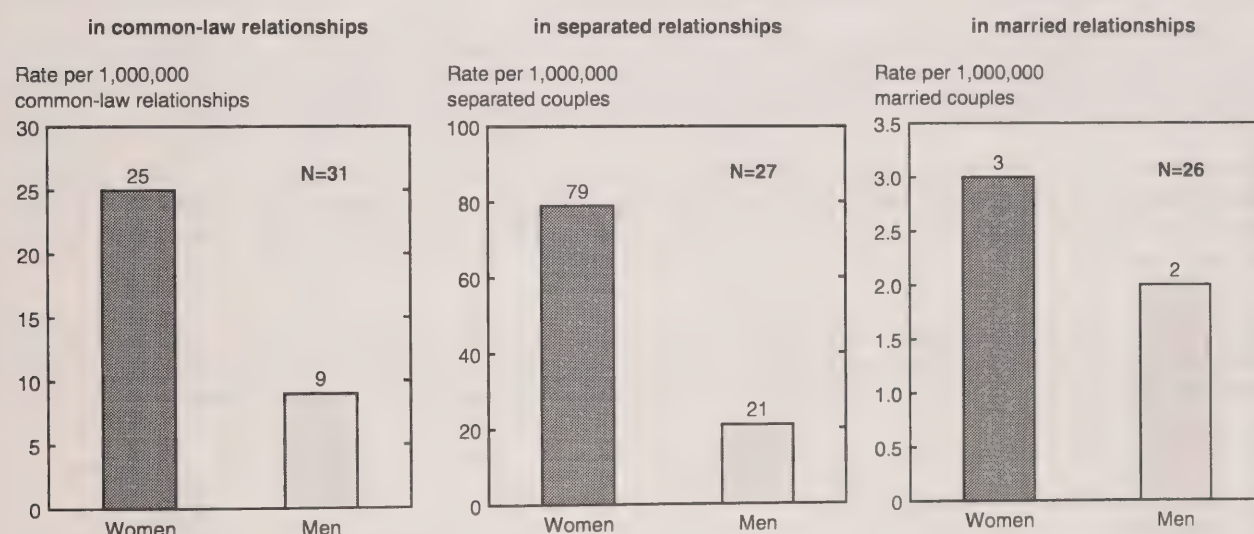
¹³ The actual rate of family homicide may be even higher than recorded by police since some cases classified as accidental or natural deaths may actually be homicides.

Calculating rates of homicide according to populations who are "at risk" gives a clearer picture.¹⁴ While separated couples represent a minority of spousal homicide offenders and victims, they are over-represented in incidents of homicide relative to the number of separated couples in the population. In 1996, women who were separated from their partners were twenty-six times more likely than their married counterparts to be killed by a spouse (79 per 1,000,000 separated couples versus 3 per 1,000,000 marriages). Furthermore, the rate of spousal homicide for women in common-law marriages was 25 per million common-law unions, more than eight times higher than married couples (Figure 12).

A similar pattern holds true for male victims, although rates of male homicide were lower in all categories. Men who are separated or in common-law relationships are at a much higher risk of being killed than their married counterparts. In 1996, the rate of homicide for men who were separated was 21 per 1,000,000 separated couples, ten times higher than their married counterparts (2 per 1,000,000 marriages). Furthermore, the rate of homicide for men in common-law marriages was 9 per 1,000,000 common-law unions, 4 times higher than their married counterparts. While men who are separated are at a higher risk of being killed by a spouse, separation does not seem to present the same risk for men as it does for women, as shown by the lower rates of homicide following marriage break-up and the lower prevalence of women stalking and harassing male ex-partners.

Figure 12

Rate of spousal homicides, 1996



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996.

Child homicides

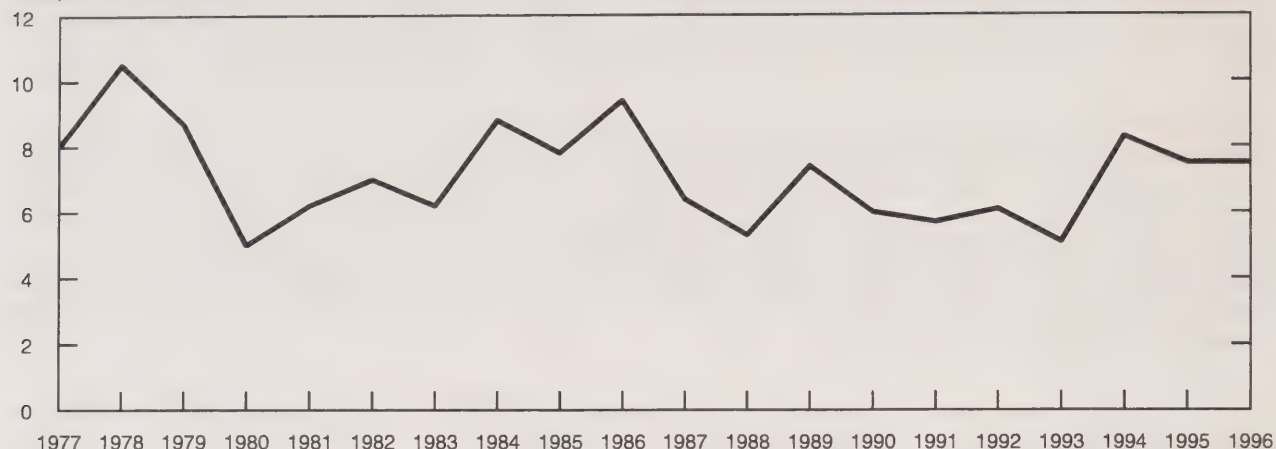
Between 1977 and 1996, the average annual rate of family related child homicide was 7.2 per 1,000,000 children and ranged from a high of 10.5 in 1978 to a low of 5.0 in 1980 (Figure 13).

¹⁴ Rates of spousal homicide between 1977 and 1996 cannot be calculated due to the changing nature of common-law status over this time period. Prior to 1981 the Census did not capture information on people living in common-law relationships. Since 1981 the Census has been collecting information on common-law status; however, the method of extrapolating this information has been improving over this time period and rates of spousal homicide would be affected by these changes.

Figure 13

Rate of family-related child homicides, 1977 to 1996

Rate per 1,000,000 children



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1977 to 1996.

In 1996, parents committed the majority (88%) of family homicides against children. The percentage of fathers responsible for killing children was almost three times that of mothers: mothers were responsible for 24% of child homicides while fathers were responsible for 64%. Other family members were responsible for the remainder (12%).

For children under 18, the highest risk of homicide occurs within the first two years of life (Figure 14). In 1996, the rate of homicide for infants under two was seven times higher than the rate for those aged 2 to 17 (ranging from 5 to 11 times higher than any other age group under 18), 5 times higher than for those aged 18 to 64, and 8 times higher than for those aged 65 and over.

Figure 14

Children under two highest rates of homicide, 1996

Rate per 1,000,000 children



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996.

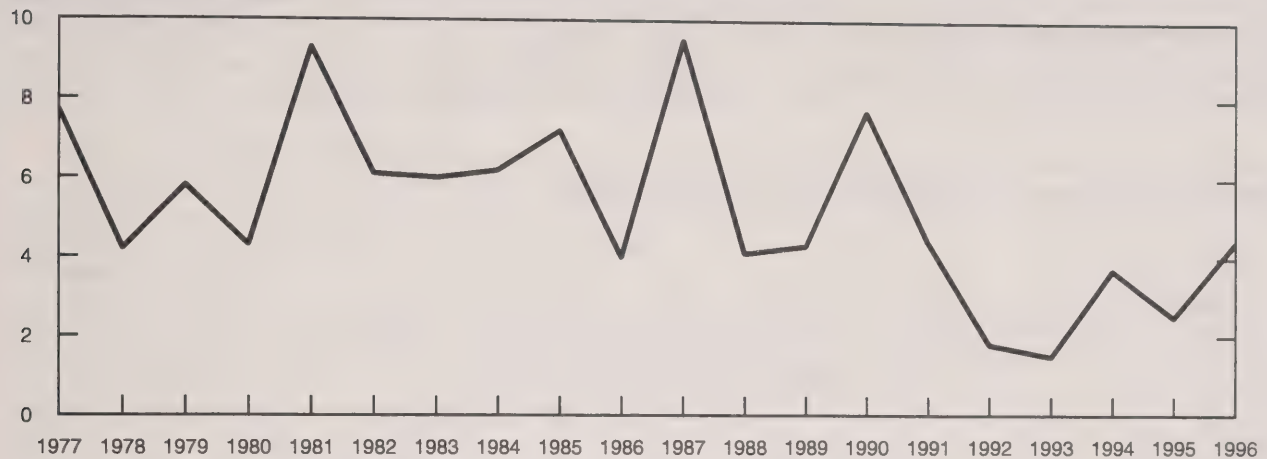
Homicides of older adults

Between 1977 and 1996, the average rate of family homicide for persons 65 years and over was 5.2 per 1,000,000 older adults and ranged from a high of 9.5 in 1987 to a low of 1.5 in 1993 (Figure 15).

Figure 15

Rate of family homicide for adults 65 years of age and over, 1977 to 1996

Rate per 1,000,000 older adults

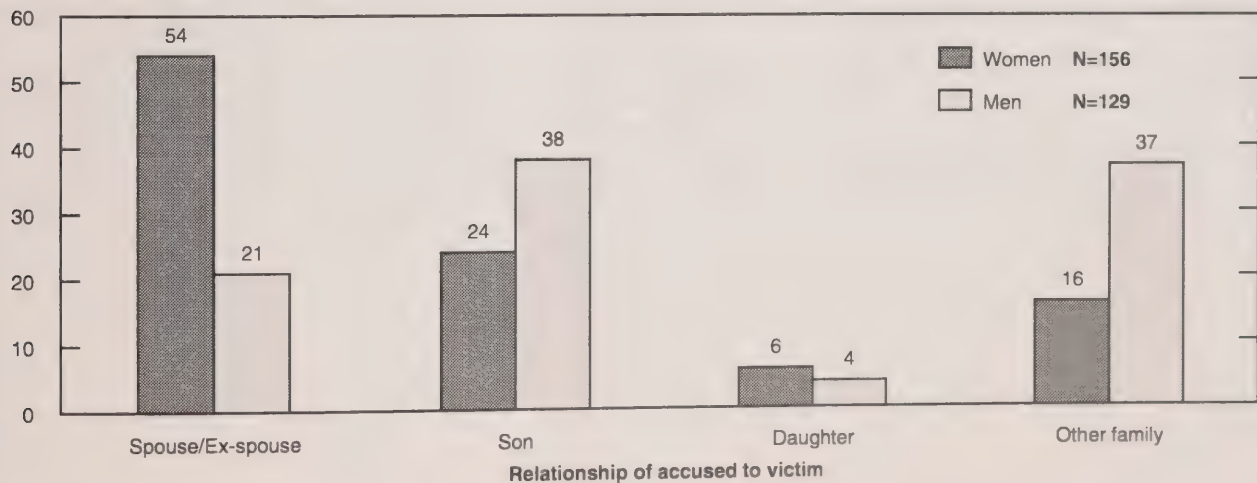


Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1977 to 1996.

Figure 16

Older women killed by spouses, older men killed by sons, 1977 to 1996

Percent



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1977 to 1996.

The argument that the abuse of older women is often the extension of wife assault is further substantiated by the number of senior homicides involving spouses. Between 1977 and 1996, 54% of older female victims of homicide were killed by spouses (Figure 16). Older men, on the other hand, were more likely to be killed by their sons (38% compared to 24% of women) and other family members (37% compared to 16% of women).

Domestic Violence Often a Factor in Homicides

Domestic violence that increases in frequency and severity over a long period of time risks becoming lethal. Spousal killings, in particular, are often preceded by a history of violence. Between 1991 and 1996, in over one-half of all spousal homicides (56%) and in one-quarter of all child and older adult homicides (26% and 24%, respectively), investigating police officers had knowledge that previous domestic violence between the victims and the suspects had taken place (Table 7). The percentage of cases which have a history of domestic violence is likely an underestimate since, according to victimization surveys, police are aware of only a small proportion of all domestic violence cases.

Table 7

Homicides with a reported history of domestic violence by type of homicide, 1991-1996

	Children		Spouses		Older adults		All family homicides ¹	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	285²	100	584	100	63	100	1,173	100
Domestic violence	75	26	329	56	15	24	482	41
No domestic violence	210	74	255	44	48	76	689	59
Men	161	100	147	100	26	100	506	100
Domestic violence	45	28	90	61	5	19	184	36
No domestic violence	116	72	57	39	21	81	322	64
Women	124	100	437	100	37	100	665	100
Domestic violence	30	24	239	55	10	27	298	45
No domestic violence	94	76	198	45	27	73	367	55

¹ The rows do not add to the total number of family homicides as homicides of children by spouses are included in both the child homicide and spousal homicide columns, and homicides of seniors by spouses are included in both the senior homicide and spousal homicide columns. All family homicides also include other types of family-related homicides not shown here.

² Excludes one case where gender of victim is unknown.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada, 1991-1996

Highlights from the 1996 New Brunswick Family Violence Database¹

Since 1993, New Brunswick has been collecting detailed information on family violence incidents in a central database called the Family Violence Statistical Information System (FVSIS). The FVSIS is based on data collected from police departments, courts and provincial correctional services.² The following analysis focuses on incidents of woman³ and child abuse⁴ that came to the attention of the criminal justice system in New Brunswick in 1996.

Police Information

In 1996, New Brunswick police departments responded to 866 incidents of woman abuse and 291 incidents of child abuse. The number of child abuse incidents reported to the police has declined by 13% since 1993, while the number of woman abuse incidents reported to the police rose by 21% over the same time period.

Women and children suffered different types of abuse. Whereas 79% of all reported woman abuse incidents were common assaults, 51% of reported child abuse incidents involved sexual assault.

Almost three-quarters (72%) of all child abuse incidents and 90% woman abuse incidents were cleared by police. Charges were laid in 56% of child abuse incidents and 68% woman abuse incidents. The remaining cases were cleared by peace bond or otherwise.

Court Information

New Brunswick court data indicate that of the 509 charges related to woman abuse which came to court in 1996, 280 or 55% resulted in guilty findings, 5% resulted in not guilty findings, 17% were withdrawn or dismissed, and 23% were outstanding at the end of the year. During 1996, the majority of offenders found guilty of charges related to woman abuse received probation sentences (31%) or fines and probation (28%). A large number received jail terms followed by probation (24%). The remaining 18% received a combination of fines, probation or jail terms.

The number of child abuse incidents that resulted in guilty findings was lower than that of woman abuse incidents: 50% of the 157 charges laid in 1996 for child abuse resulted in guilty findings. Furthermore, 3% of charges resulted in not guilty findings, 19% were withdrawn or dismissed and 28% were outstanding. Sixty-one offenders were sentenced or awaiting sentencing for the 78 charges involving child abuse. The sentence most frequently handed down was probation (34%), followed by jail term and probation (33%); the remainder received a combination of fines, probation and jail terms (33%).

Provincial Correctional Services Information

The average sentence length for offences related to woman abuse was 45 days and 248 days (or 8 months) for offences related to child abuse.

¹ Figures and information for this box are extracted from *New Brunswick Family Violence Criminal Justice Statistical Report - 1996 Annual Report, October 1997*.

² The FVSIS data represents all incidents reported to all police forces in New Brunswick with the exception of the Saint John Municipal Police Force.

³ Woman abuse includes abuse by married or common-law partners as well as dating partners. This differs from the analysis conducted throughout this report which excludes dating relationships.

⁴ Child abuse includes abuse by family and non-family members.

NOTE: The FVSIS does not capture data on the abuse of seniors other than that committed by a partner (married, common-law or dating), therefore separate analysis of senior abuse by all other family members cannot be conducted.

Summary

The issue of family violence in Canada has been a concern for the general public and policy makers since the 1970's. Throughout this time, policies and legislation have been enacted which reinforce the serious nature of violence among family members. Statistics Canada has played a role in developing and improving various tools for measuring the incidence of family violence. In upcoming years, Statistics Canada will release information on the current state of transition homes in Canada and continue to investigate and improve methods for collecting statistical information on spousal, senior and child abuse.

Data Sources

Incident based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey

The Incident based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCRII) Survey captures information on selected characteristics of an incident and basic data on the persons involved in an incident, both victims and accused, as reported by the police. The data in this report are based on crimes reported to 154 police departments in 1996. Although the UCRII Survey data now represents 47% of reported incidents across Canada, the data are not nationally representative. Currently, there is an urban bias and a large majority of reported incidents come from Ontario (38%) and Quebec (39%).

The UCRII Time Series Database is a subset of data collected by the incident based UCR Survey. The data are based on crimes reported to a sample of 61 police forces which reported to the survey from 1993 to 1996 and represents 29% of reported crimes in Canada. The data are not nationally representative.

Homicide Survey

The Homicide Survey collects police-reported data on homicide incidents and characteristics of the victims and accused. Whenever a homicide becomes known to the police, a detailed survey questionnaire is completed. Homicide includes first-degree murder, second-degree murder, manslaughter and infanticide.

Violence Against Women Survey

Statistics Canada's 1993 national survey on Violence Against Women (VAWS) was designed to provide detailed national data on all forms of sexual and non-sexual violence against adult women. Statistics Canada randomly telephoned 12,300 women 18 years of age and older in the ten provinces to talk about their experiences of sexual and physical violence by strangers, dates/boyfriends, acquaintances and spouses or common-law partners. The responses of these 12,300 women have been weighted to represent the 10,498,000 adult women in the Canadian population. National estimates are expected to be within 1.2% of the true population at the 95% confidence interval. Estimates of sub-groups of the population will have wider confidence intervals.

Measures of violence for the VAW Survey were restricted to *Criminal Code* definitions of assault and sexual assault. Violence by current and previous husbands and common-law partners was measured by responses to the following question:

We are particularly interested in learning more about women's experiences of violence in their homes. I would like you to tell me if your (current/previous) husband/partner has ever done any of the following to you. This includes incidents that may have occurred while you were dating.

- . Threatened to hit you with his fist or anything else that could hurt you*
- . Thrown anything at you that could hurt you*
- . Pushed, grabbed or shoved you*
- . Slapped you*
- . Kicked, bit, or hit you with his fist*
- . Hit you with something that could hurt you*
- . Beat you up*
- . Choked you*
- . Threatened to or used a gun or knife on you*
- . Forced you into any sexual activity when you did not want to by threatening you, holding you down, or hurting you in some way*

Transition Home Survey

In 1991-92 Statistics Canada began collecting basic information on transition home services and clientele. The survey was expanded in 1992-93 to include more detailed information on women and children using the shelters and services available to them. In 1994-95, selected questions from the 1992-93 Transition Home Survey were repeated to allow for a trend analysis of important data points. Results from the 1997-98 survey will be profiled in the next family violence report.

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